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AUTHOR Clement, Sherrie
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ABSTRACT

In a literary analysis of selected Hans Christian Andersen fairy tales, the characters were divided into three main types: human beings; plants, animals, and inanimate objects; and imaginary creations. A comparison was then made between Andersen's characters and those in traditional fairy tales. The findings revealed that Andersen succeeded in his attempt to use the fairy tale as a literary art form by portraying characters with individual and unique personalities. (Author/FL)

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INDIVIDUALS OR TYPES: A CHARACTER ANALYSIS OF HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN'S FAIRY TALES

by

Sherrie Clement

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ABSTRACT

This study is a literary analysis of the characters found in selected Hans Christian Andersen fairy tales. The characters were divided into three main types: (1) human beings as characters; (2) plants, animals and inanimate objects as characters; and (3) imaginary creations as characters. A comparison between Andersen's characters and traditional fairy tale characters was made. It was concluded that Andersen succeeded in his attempt to use the fairy tale as a literary art form by portraying characters with individual and unique personalities.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The fairy tale had its beginnings in man's natural desire to seek for a better world than the one in which he lived. It expressed man's eternal hope that right would prevail over the forces of oppression in a world that at times seemed dominated by evil:

> It was a dangerous world and a cruel world, and therefore those who dwelt in it endeavoured in their tales to escape from it. They pictured weakness winning against might, gentleness and courtesy against brutality, brains as against mere animal strength . . . [and they] exalted . . . daring, boldness, originality, brains--because the people who made [the tales] realized that the hope of humanity lay not in passivity but in action.[1]

It is in this ancient, traditional form of expression that the Danish writer Hans Christian Andersen has gained world-wide fame and lasting recognition. It must be remembered that "Andersen was a creative writer, not just a collector of folk tales. It is therefore wrong to bracket him, as is often done, with the brothers Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm. . . ."[2] Andersen used the basic form of the fairy tale but brought to it a creative genius that is strictly his own. He used it as a literary art form, and therefore some basic differences between his fairy tales and those derived from an oral tradition exist. Artistic,

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[1]John Buchan, The Novel and the Fairy Tale, The English Association, No. 79 (July, 1931), pp. 6-7.

[2]Elias Bredsdorff, Hans Christian Andersen and the Story of His Life and Work (London: Phaidon Press Limited, 1975), p. 308.

precise description and a tendency to consciously bring in symbols, often interpreting them within the context of the tales, are some easily observable differences found in Andersen.[3]

Another important difference lies in the fact that oral folk tales are based on a maximum of action and a minimum of characterization. The complete interest of the reader is focused on whether the hero will overcome the obstacles in his path and reach his princess. Andersen, on the other hand, is concerned with creating major and minor characters who have personalities. In referring to Andersen's tales, W. H. Auden wrote:

> . . . the action is subordinate to the actors, providing them with a suitable occasion to display their characters which are individual. . . . The difference is one that distinguishes all primitive literature . . . from modern.[4]

This study focuses on characterization differences found between traditional fairy tales and Andersen's tales. The emphasis is on how well, if at all, Andersen succeeded in developing characters with unique personalities and depth. Do his tales contain character types who are universal because they represent the strivings of mankind as a whole as do the oral fairy tales, or do they contain characters who are universal because they are real individuals in whom man can identify his own strengths and weaknesses as a human being?

There is a difficulty in studying an author's writings through translations, especially one such as Andersen who used many deliberate twists in grammatical structure and colloquialisms in his attempt to

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[3]W. H. Auden, Forewords and Afterwords, ed. Edward Mendelson (New York: Random House, 1973), p. 205.

[4]Auden, p. 207

create tales that were close to the spoken language. However, the fact that Andersen has gained his world-wide fame through translations suggests that his uniqueness and creativity do come through. Of course, there are many bad translations of Andersen, and a proper understanding of his works has suffered because of them. Elias Bredsdorff, in his study of Andersen, lists what he feels are the five best translations of Andersen's tales into English. Four of the translations he designates as "English" versions and one as "American."[5] Jean Hersholt, whose book was chosen for this study, did the American translation. All quotes and references to Andersen's fairy tales are taken from this source.[6]

A division of Andersen's works by characters has been done in this study for the sake of order and comparison. The three categories of characters that were analyzed consist of the following: (1) the human characters; (2) the characters who are plants, animals and inanimate objects; and (3) the imaginary characters. Examples from traditional fairy tales were contrasted with selected Andersen tales to reveal the differences that exist in characterization. The twenty-five tales contained in Hersholt's collection of Andersen are listed in the appendix. Starred titles indicate the tales specifically used as examples in this paper.

In "recent years the English-speaking world had tended to dismiss Andersen as a writer of literary importance and to relegate him to the nursery."[7] Critics in his own country recognize his literary

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[5]Bredsdorff, p. 336.

[6]Jean Hersholt, trans., Andersen's Fairy Tales, by Hans Christian Andersen (New York: The Heritage Press, 1942).

[7]Bredsdorff, p. 9.

ability, but more studies of Andersen's works need to be done in America so that Andersen can take his place here as a writer who has "something to offer both . . . children and grown-ups."[8] Andersen, himself, once wrote that the young people read his tales for the "exterior" part, the old ones for the "inner part."[9] This study attempts to create a greater awareness of and appreciation for the "inner part" of Andersen's tales with the hope that through an examination of Andersen's characters, a greater understanding of man's own strengths and failings will be gained.

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[8]Bredsdorff, p. 358.

[9]Jean Hersholt, trans., Hans Christian Andersen, Vol. I (New York: The Limited Editions Club, 1942), p. 19.

Chapter 2

HUMAN CHARACTERS IN FAIRY TALES

The humans in traditional fairy tales are stock characters who could be exchanged from one fairy tale to another with no noticeable difference in characterization. One common type of fairy tale hero finds himself on the very bottom of the social scale. If he is of noble birth, he is usually enchanted into some lower form of life, takes on a lower position for a while, or is the youngest son without an inheritance. He must overcome certain obstacles or tests in order to reach his princess. It is usually through his kindness and noble virtues that he receives magical help to attain his goal. "He has no hidden qualities that are in time revealed. As a character, he is the same person at the end that he was at the beginning; all that has changed is his status."[1]

There is an Andersen character who fits this stereotype. He is John, the main character in "The Traveling Companion."[2] His father dies at the beginning of the story and John is left on his own to seek his fortune. On one stop in his journey, he pays his last money to help bury a dead man properly. At the end of the journey, he finds a princess whom he wants to marry but first he must answer three questions. If he does not answer the questions correctly, he will be killed. The dead man then comes back as a spirit and helps John by giving him the answers

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[1]W. H. Auden, The Dyer's Hand and Other Essays (London: Faber and Faber, 1962), p. 212.

[2]Hersholt, Andersen's Fairy Tales, pp. 39-57.

to the three questions. John represents a typical fairy tale hero. He performs a kind deed and receives the reward for it, but there is not too much revealed about him as a person. An exception to this lack of characterization is the remark that John "felt sure . . . help would come to him, though he didn't know how . . . and he preferred not to think about it" (p. 50) which reveals John as a rather over-trusting, innocent fool. On the whole, however, his characterization is somewhat superficial. His personality is not well developed nor does it change. Only his status in life changes from a poor orphan to a king.

Despite exceptions, there are many main characters in Andersen's tales who, through subtle detail, conversation and actions, are revealed as realistic, unique individuals. Such a person is the Prince in "The Garden of Paradise."[3] His main interest in life is to learn about the Garden of Paradise and to find out where it is located. He keeps blaming Adam and Eve for partaking of the forbidden fruit and saying, "'If it had only been I, that would never have happened, and sin would never have come into the world" (p. 132). One day he is out exploring and happens to stumble into the cave where the Four Winds and their mother live. In the ensuing conversation, the Prince is revealed as a rather blunt, out-spoken individual. As soon as he enters the cave, he complains to the mother about an "awful draft" in the cave. He also tells her that she has a rather "forceful way of speaking" and is "not so gentle as the women" with which he usually associates. After spending the night in their cave, he is taken by the East Wind to the Garden of Paradise. The Prince meets the fairy of the Garden who invites him to stay but

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[3]Hersholt, Andersen's Fairy Tales, pp. 132-145.

warns him that every night for a hundred years she will attempt to lure him to the Tree of Knowledge. If he follows and kisses her, the Garden of Paradise will vanish, but if he does not succumb to the temptation, he will grow stronger and remain in Paradise. Of course the Prince, who has always been sure of his ability to resist temptation, decides to stay. However, on the very first night the fairy calls to him, he runs to follow after her, forgetting his promise. He rationalizes to himself that he will not kiss her. Nevertheless, as soon as he sees her sleeping under the Tree of Knowledge, he decides that the kiss would be worth more than Paradise and so he kisses her. Immediately Paradise vanishes. The Prince awakens and finds himself back in his own world. Unlike a typical fairy tale hero where "nothing that happens to him can be called personally significant in the sense that . . . his awareness of himself is altered,"[4] the Prince in Andersen's tale does become aware of himself and the potential for evil that lies within his own soul. Unlike the typical hero, he has thwarted his chance for eternal happiness through his own actions. His view of life and of himself has been changed in a significant way.

Contrasted to this prince of Andersen's is the hero of "The Riddle," an example found in a collection of Grimm's fairy tales.[5] The Prince in "The Riddle" sets off on a journey as does the Prince in "The Garden of Paradise," but the Prince in the Grimm's tale has no specific inner motivation beyond the general desire to see the world. The difference between the characterization of the two princes might be more clearly revealed by comparing the introductions to the stories.

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[4]Auden, The Dyer's Hand and Other Essays, p. 212.

[5]Grimm's Fairy Tales (Chicago: M. A. Donohue & Co., [n.d.]), pp. 114-17.

The tale from "The Riddle" begins: "Once upon a time there was a King's son, who had a mind to see the world; so he set forth, and took no one with him but a faithful servant" (p. 114). Contrast that opening with Andersen's:

> There was once a King's son. No one had so many beautiful books as he. In them he could read of everything that had ever happened in this world, and he could see it all pictured in fine illustrations. He could find out about every race of people and every country, but there was not a single word about where to find the Garden of Paradise, and this, just this, was the very thing that he thought most about (p. 132).

In "The Riddle," as in other oral folk tales, the bare essentials are given: the hero is a King's son and he wants to see the world. Andersen, on the other hand, fills in the background of his characters. He gives them specific interests and reasons for doing what they do.

Andersen also uses conversation to reveal his character's personalities. This technique was illustrated earlier in the conversation between the mother of the Four Winds and the Prince. Conversation in oral tales is sparse and only used for informational gain, not indirect character revelation. A typical conversation in "The Riddle" is as follows:

> [He] asked her whether he and his servant could find a welcome in the cottage for the night. "Yes, certainly," replied the maiden in a sorrowful voice, "you can; but I advise you not to enter." "Why not?" asked the Prince. The maiden sighed, and answered, "My stepmother practises wicked arts; she acts not hospitably to strangers (p. 114-15).

This conversation is one of three found in the whole story. It is there merely to impart the necessary information about the owner of the cottage to the hero. It is intended to add complexity and interest to the plot, not the characters.

Another example of an Andersen hero is the Prince in "The Swine-

herd."[6] At the beginning of the story he seems to be a typical hero: a poor prince who wants to marry the Emperor's daughter. He sends the Princess his rare rose and nightingale as an invitation for marriage. She despises the gifts because they are not manmade and therefore refuses to marry the Prince. The Prince, however, begins to show his clever and resourceful nature. He gets a job at the palace after he has disguised himself as a swineherd. He constructs some marvelous, artificial toys which he sells to the Princess for kisses. The Emperor finds out and banishes both of them from his kingdom. Not knowing the Swineherd is the Prince in disguise, the Princess bemoans the fact that she had not married the Prince, and in traditional fairy tales they would have gotten married and lived "happily ever after." This prince, however, is not a typical, stereotyped hero. He exhibits great personal dignity and spirit in his reply to the Princess:

> "I have only contempt for you. . . . You turned down a Prince's honest offer, and you didn't appreciate the rose or the nightingale, but you were all too ready to kiss a swineherd for a tinkling toy to amuse you. You are properly punished" (p. 167).

Then he goes back to his kingdom, shuts and locks the door.

In contrast, the Prince in "The Riddle" marries his Princess though he knows she is haughty and has used deception to obtain the answers to his riddles. He reveals her as a fraud and then prepares to marry her. Since the individual characters are not the main concern in oral tales, it does not matter what kind of person the Princess seems to be. The crucial factor in the story is that the Prince, symbolic of all mankind, attains his highest goal, symbolized by the Princess. Achievement and reward, not individual people, are the important elements. The

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[6]Hersholt, Andersen's Fairy Tales, pp. 162-67.

Prince in "The Swineherd," on the other hand, is concerned about his Princess as a person, not as a symbol of the highest goal he can obtain. He rejects her because he does not like the kind of person she is. He has individual integrity and a willingness to admit that what he was seeking for was not really worth obtaining. He is a person with his own set of values, not a stock representation of all mankind.

Another type of hero found in folk tales is the one who, through use of his wits, comes out the winner. However, as in other folk tales, the emphasis is still on the action. Characters are unimportant except to the extent they are involved personally with the action. An example of this character type is found in Grimm's tale, "The Valiant Little Tailor."[7] Interest in this story is sustained by a series of episodes in which the tailor tricks a giant into thinking that he, the tailor, has great strength and abilities. This type of action is illustrated in the following excerpt:

> And soon the Giant showed [the tailor] a bed where he might lie down and go to sleep. The bed, however, was too big for him, so he slipped out of it and crept into a corner. When midnight came, and the Giant thought the Tailor would be in a deep sleep, he got up, and taking a great iron bar beat the bed right through at one stroke, and supposed he had thereby given the Tailor his death-blow. At the earliest dawn of morning the Giants went forth into the forest, quite forgetting the Tailor, when presently up he came, quite merry, and showed himself before them. The Giants were terrified, and, fearing he would kill them all, they ran away in great haste (p. 101-02).

The Tailor then proceeds on to other adventures where he uses deception and trickery to make others believe he is very strong and to save himself.

In Andersen, however, interest is captured not only by the action but also by the characters and their reactions to and observations about

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[7] Grimm's Fairy Tales, pp. 98-106.

the situations. For example, in the story "Little Claus and Big Claus,"[8] there is a feud going on between the rich Big Claus and the poor but clever Little Claus. In a situation similar in intent to the one quoted from "The Valiant Little Tailor," Big Claus sneaks into Little Claus' house and hits Little Claus' dead grandmother over the head thinking she is Little Claus. Though the action is exciting, there is more interest in the observations of Little Claus than there is in the situation itself. Little Claus thinks, "'What a wicked man. . . .Why, he would have killed me. It's lucky for my grandmother that she was already dead, or he'd have been the death of her'" (p. 14). This example is evidence of irony and subtlety not found in traditional fairy tales but for which Andersen is famous.

The children in Andersen's fairy tales do not always seem as realistic as his other characters. Though they are portrayed with more detail than is common in traditional tales, they tend to become a sentimental, one-sided portrayal of innocence and purity. Gerda, a little girl from "The Snow Queen,"[9] is a typical example. She is a blond, blue-eyed, pious child who never does anything wrong. On her way to rescue Kay, her friend who has been stolen by the Snow Queen, she walks barefooted through the ice and snow "fearlessly and undaunted" because of her love and loyalty to Kay. Kay is also portrayed as a sweet, innocent child who does no wrong until he gets two magic splinters of glass in his eye and heart. This accident causes him to see only the bad side of things, but from the viewpoint of the reader, helps him to act a little

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[8]Hersholt, Andersen's Fairy Tales, pp. 7-19.

[9]Ibid., pp. 196-228.

more realistically. He begins to tease Gerda and to play with the other boys instead of her. When the Snow Queen carries him away, he is very frightened and wants to "say his prayers but he [can] only remember the multiplication tables" (p. 202). However, when he loses the splinters, he becomes his sweet, loving self again.

Kay and Gerda are seen as either all good or all bad, not as a realistic mixture of both. The children in oral tales, such as Grimm's "The Little Brother and Sister,"[10] tend to be portrayed in this unrealistic manner also. They are innocent victims of such people as their step-mother. But though the world is against them, they are loyal, kind and brave with no hint of quarreling or serious failings.

Andersen, on the other hand, does not exhibit this stereotyping tendency in all of his stories about children. Karen, the main character in "The Red Shoes,"[11] has a problem with vanity. She gets a pair of beautiful red shoes for her confirmation, but during the service, instead of keeping her mind on the proceedings, she thinks only of her red shoes. Later, the red shoes become enchanted. Though forbidden to, she starts to dance in them and finds she cannot stop. She finally has them chopped off and begins her repentance. She is sorry for a whole week and cries a lot of tears but when Sunday comes she says, "'Now I have suffered and cried enough. I think I must be as good as many who sit in church and hold their heads high'" (p. 240). But when she tries to go to church, she finds her red shoes come back to haunt her. Finally, when she has sincerely repented, she is able to go back to the church and find peace.

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[10] Grimm's Fairy Tales, pp. 60-66.

[11] Hersholt, Andersen's Fairy Tales, pp. 235-41.

Though the enchanted shoes are not realistic, they become a symbol of real sins. The false pride and repeated repentance that Karen struggles through before she gains peace reveal her as a real person and one with whom others can identify.

In oral fairy tales the action centers around the hero or heroine. All other characters are there to aid them in their quest. Minor characters are nonentities in the sense of having personalities or existences of their own. The maiden in "The Riddle" is only in the story to warn the Prince about the wicked step-mother who trys to poison them. Once the warning is given she is not mentioned again. However, one of Andersen's greatest talents is the way in which he can create interesting and unique background characters with a sentence or two. They often have more personality than the main characters. For example, in "The Traveling Companion," John, the hero, is a stereotyped, flat character. In contrast, the King, a minor character and father of the Princess whom John wants to marry, has a very interesting and endearing personality. When John goes to the palace to meet the Princess, the old King answers the door in his dressing gown and embroidered slippers. He starts to shake John's hand, but when he finds that John wants to marry the Princess, he bursts into tears for he is afraid that John will get killed just like all the other suitors. The old King shows John around the palace. Then, when the pages bring in jam and gingerbread, the old King is so "miserable that he [can't] eat anything at all. Besides, the gingerbread [is] too hard for his teeth" (p. 50).

In one part of "The Galoshes of Fortune,"[12] Andersen's talent for depicting minor characters through short descriptions is used heavily.

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[12]Ibid., pp. 83-110.

One of the characters is granted the wish to walk through certain people's hearts. The brief description of what he finds sharply and succinctly reveals the people's respective personalities:

> The interne shrank to almost nothing, and set out on a most extraordinary journey through the hearts of all the spectators in the first row. The first heart he entered was that of a lady, but at first he mistook it for a room in the Orthopaedic Institute, or Hospital, where the plaster casts of deformed limbs are hung upon the walls. The only difference was that at the hospital those casts were made when the patients came in, while these casts that were kept in the heart were made as the good people departed. For every physical or mental fault of the friends she had lost had been carefully stored away.
>
> Then he found his way into a cabinet of mirrors such as is to be seen at Rosenborg Castle, though in this heart the mirrors had the power of magnifying objects enormously. Like the Grand Lama of Tibet, the owner's insignificant ego sat in the middle of the floor, in admiring contemplation of his own greatness (pp. 98-99).

Another example of Andersen's ability in this regard is the Lord-in-Waiting from "The Nightingale."[13] This person is "so exalted that when anyone of lower rank dared to speak to him, or ask him a question, he only answered, 'P,' which means nothing at all" (p. 169). Then there is the little robber girl in "The Snow Queen" who is a strange mixture of wildness and kindness. She saves Gerda from being killed by the other robbers only to tell her, "'Even if I should get angry with you, they shan't kill you, because I'll do it myself'" (p. 217). She sleeps with one arm around Gerda's neck and a knife clenched in her other hand. But it is this little robber girl who helps Gerda escape and gives her a reindeer, food and clothes to help her on her way to find Kay.

In oral folk tales, the reader tends to identify with the struggles, defeats and triumphs the hero or heroine is experiencing, not with the characters themselves. The focus in Andersen's tales is not so much

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[13]Ibid., pp. 167-77.

on what the characters do as on what they are or become because of their experiences. Some do not become more than cardboard figures, but most of them live, move and dream in a world created by their own personalities. They cannot be mistaken or substituted for characters in any other fairy tale because the internal change they do or do not experience is the essence of their particular story. Whether it is an Emperor who is embarrassed when he realizes he has no clothes on but continues the procession anyway, or whether it is a young courtier who hears a cow moo and thinks it is a nightingale, Andersen skillfully captures and conveys the essence of their personalities. His human characters come alive, not only as allegorical symbols, but as human beings in their own right.

Chapter 3

PLANTS, ANIMALS AND INANIMATE OBJECTS AS CHARACTERS

Much of Andersen's success as a writer of fairy tales comes from his ability to give life and personality to plants, animals and inanimate objects. Andersen, "with a touch of his wand, rendered inhuman things--furniture, toys, flowers, poultry--instinct with humanity. . . . He did not merely give speech to a pair of scissors, he gave character too."[1]

The main character of "The Fir Tree"[2] is an example of Andersen's ability to bring plants to life. This particular fir tree is in a "headlong hurry to grow up." It takes "no pleasure in the sunshine, nor in the birds. The glowing clouds, that sailed overhead at sunrise and sunset, [mean] nothing to it" (p. 187). It always wants to be somewhere and something it is not. It finally has the chance to become a Christmas tree, but even then it still lives for the future:

> "Oh," thought the tree, "if tonight would only come! If only the candles were lit! And after that, what happens then? Will the trees come trooping out of the woods to see me? Will the sparrows flock to the windows? Shall I take root here, and stand in fine ornaments all winter and summer long?"
>
> That was how much it knew about it. All its longing had gone to its bark and set it to aching, which is as bad for a tree as a headache is for us (p. 190).

After Christmas the fir tree is stuffed away in an attic. He repeatedly tells a story to the mice that he had heard while he was a

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[1]E. V. Lucas, Adventures and Enthusiams (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1920), p. 40.

[2]Hersholt, Andersen's Fairy Tales, pp. 187-95.

Christmas tree. It is the only story he knows. The tree confides to the mice, "'I heard it on the happiest evening of my life, but I did not know then how happy I was.'" Finally the tree is dragged down from the attic to be destroyed. "It thought of its own young days in the deep woods, and of the merry Christmas Eve, and of the little mice who had been so pleased when it told them the story of Humpty-Dumpty." To the very last the tree is thinking of what could have been. "'My days are over and past,' said the poor tree. 'Why didn't I enjoy them while I could'" (pp. 194-95)?

As has been pointed out with regard to other Andersen tales, the emphasis in "The Fir Tree" is on the main character: its thoughts, feelings and reactions to life. Once again the contrast between oral folk tales is apparent in that action is subordinate to character. It is not so much the circumstances surrounding the fir tree that create the story, rather it is the fir tree's attitude toward those circumstances that maintains interest. Also, such details as the fir tree having "barkache" tend to give personal definition to the tree, making it even more realistic and believeable.

Animals have always been widely used as characters in folk tales. Andersen's tales are no exception. However, his handling of animal characters, as well as other types of characters, differs greatly from those in oral tales. Take for example "Henny-Penny,"[3] an English tale from the oral tradition. It begins:

> One day Henny-penny was picking corn in the cornyard when--whack!--something hit her upon the head. "Goodness gracious me!"

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[3]Joseph Jacobs, comp., English Fairy Tales (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1967), pp. 113-16.

said Henny-penny; "the sky's a-going to fall; I must go and tell the king."

So she went along and she went along and she went along till she met Cocky-locky. "Where are you going, Henny-penny?" says Cocky-locky. "Oh! I'm going to tell the king the sky's a-falling," says Henny-penny. "May I come with you?" says Cocky-locky. "Certainly," says Henny-penny. So Henny-penny and Cocky-locky went to tell the king the sky was falling (p. 113).

Along the way they meet Ducky-daddles, Goosey-poosey and Turkey-lurkey. The action or conversation with each does not vary in any significant way. They finally meet Foxy-woxy who, in the end, kills everyone but Henny-penny. She manages to escape but she never gets to tell the king the "sky was falling." As in other folk tales, the conversation and action in "Henny-Penny" is simple and repetitive. The characters are shallow as far as individualism is concerned. The main emphasis is on the trick the fox plays on them. None of the characters could be said to have personalities that set them apart as unique animals.

In contrast to the character of Henny-penny is the hen in Andersen's tale "The Ugly Duckling."[4] Her personality becomes evident as she talks to the ugly duckling:

In this house the cat was master and the hen was mistress. They always said, "We and the world," for they thought themselves half of the world, and much the better half at that. The duckling thought that there might be more than one way of thinking, but the hen would not hear it.

"Can you lay eggs?" she asked.

"No."

"Then be so good as to hold your tongue."

The duckling sat in a corner, feeling most despondent. Then he remembered the fresh air and the sunlight. Such a desire to go swimming on the water possessed him that he could not help telling the hen about it.

"What on earth has come over you?" the hen cried. "You haven't a thing to do, and that's why you get such silly notions. Lay us an egg, or learn to purr, and you'll get over it."

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[4]Hersholt, Andersen's Fairy Tales, pp. 177-87.

"You don't understand me," said the duckling.

"Well, if we don't, who would? Surely you don't think you are cleverer than the cat and the old woman--to say nothing of myself. Don't be so conceited, child. Just thank your Maker for all the kindness we have shown you. . . . Believe me, I tell you this for your own good. I say unpleasant truths, but that's the only way you can know who are your friends . . ." (pp. 183-84).

There are many other examples of Andersen's adroitness at creating animal characters who "have a psychological make-up which is very much like that of certain humans."[5] There is the ugly duckling's mother who says to another duck:

"It takes a long time with that one egg. . . . It won't crack, but look at the others. They are the cutest little ducklings I've ever seen. They look exactly like their father, the wretch! He hasn't come to see me at all" (p. 178).

Another example is a description of a wedding of mice:

. . . On the right stood all the little lady mice, whispering and giggling as if they were making fun of each other. On the left stood all the gentlemen mice, twirling their mustaches with their forepaws. The bridegroom and his bride stood in a hollow cheese rind in the center of the floor, and kissed like mad, in plain view of all the guests. But of course they were engaged, and were to be married immediately.

More and more guests kept crowding in. The mice were nearly trampling each other to death, and the bridal couple had posted themselves in the doorway, so that no one could come or leave. Like the passage, this whole hall had been greased with bacon rind, and that was the complete banquet. However, for the dessert, a pea was brought in, on which a little mouse of the family had bitten the name of the bridal couple, that is to say the first letter of the name. This was a most unusual touch (pp. 157-58).

In such passages, Andersen creates animal characters which remain a part of their animal world, but to whom humans can easily relate.

"Andersen's ability to give life to inanimate objects was one of the most striking innovations of the nursery tale."[6] Inanimate objects

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[5]Bredsdorff, p. 320.

[6]Ibid., p. 325.

take on new life through the skill of Andersen as do the plant and animal characters. Take for instance the kitchen scene from the tale "The Flying Trunk"[7]:

> The tea pot was asked to sing, but she had a cold in her throat. She said nothing short of boiling water could make her sing, but that was sheer affectation. She wished to sing only for the ladies and gentlemen in the drawing room.
>
> On the window sill was an old quill pen that the servant used. There was nothing remarkable about him except that he had been dipped too deep in the ink, but in that difference he took pride.
>
> "The tea pot can sing or not, as she pleases," he declared. "In a cage, outside my window, there's a nightingale who will sing for us. He hasn't practiced for the occasion, but tonight we won't be too critical."
>
> "I find it highly improper,' said the tea kettle, who was the official kitchen singer, and a half-sister of the tea pot. "Why should we listen to a foreign bird? Is that patriotic? Let the market basket make the decision."
>
> "I am most annoyed," said the market basket. "I am more annoyed than anyone can imagine. Is this any way to spend an evening? Wouldn't it be better to call the house to order? Everyone take his appointed place, and I shall run the whole game. That will be something quite different (pp. 149-50).

Compare this passage with one from the Grimm's tale "The Straw, the Coal, and the Bean."[8]

> . . . Presently they came to a little stream, over which there was no bridge or path, and they did not know how they should get over. The Straw gave good advice, and said, "I will lay myself across, so that you may cross over upon me, as upon a bridge." So the Straw stretched itself from one bank to the other, and the Coal, which was of a fiery nature, tripped lightly upon the newly-built bridge. But when it came to the middle of it, and heard the water running along beneath, it was frightened, and stood still, not daring to go further. The Straw, however, beginning to burn, broke in two and fell into the stream, and the Coal, slipping after, hissed as it reached the water, and gave up the ghost. The Bean which had prudently remained upon the shore, was forced to laugh at this accident, and the joke being so good, it laughed so immoderately that it burst itself. Now, they would all have been done for alike, if a tailor, who was out on his wanderings, had not just then, by great good luck, sat himself down near the stream. Having a commiserating heart, he

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[7]Hersholt, Andersen's Fairy Tales, pp. 145-51.

[8]Grimm's Fairy Tales, pp. 106-08.

> took out needle and thread, and sewed the Bean together. The Bean thanked him exceedingly; but, as the tailor used black thread, it has happened since that time that every Bean has a black seam (pp. 107-08).

This tale is based on a factual question: "'Why do beans have a black seam?' The characterization of the straw, the coal, and the bean does not extend beyond the minimum required by the respective physical qualities. The whole interest lies in the incidents."[9] Andersen, on the other hand is interested in the objects as separate entities. He carefully depicts their thoughts, actions and conversations in order to reveal their respective peculiarities and similarities. Inanimate objects are not being "treated anthropomorphically, as in Grimm; on the contrary, human beings have been transmuted into inanimate ovjects in order that they may be judged without prejudice. . . ."[10]

In Andersen's tales, every plant, animal and inanimate object has its own lifestyle. They are individual in the sense that each kettle, flower or duck that could be found would talk and act quite differently from any other.

> . . . He endows everything he sees--china shepherdesses, tin soldiers, mice, and flowers--with the similitude of life, action, and conversation. He can make the inhabitants of one's mantelpiece capable of epic adventures, and havs a greater sense of possibilities in a pair of tongs or a door-knocker than most of us have in men and women. . . ."[11]

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[9]Auden, Forewords and Afterwords, p. 206.

[10]Ibid., p. 207.

[11]Robert Lynd, Essays on Life and Literature (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1951), p. 160.

Chapter 4

IMAGINARY CREATIONS AS CHARACTERS

Andersen's imaginary creations include such characters as Thumbelina, the Marsh King's daughter, the little mermaid, and the elves from "The Elf Mound. These characters represent Andersen's ability to write tales with a "variety of humour, pathos, homely satire, diablerie, and moonshine."[1] Examples of Andersen's humourous, satirical and fun characters have been given in previous chapters. The focus in this chapter will be on one character, the little mermaid, who illustrates the greatest difference between Andersen's tales and the typical fairy tale form.

The traditional fairy tale has the hero or heroine triumphing over all obstacles and living "happily ever after." In Andersen "it is the exception rather than the rule to marry and live happily ever afterwards."[2] Despite the fact that there is often some compensation or possibility for reward if the character is worthy, the tales still leave a feeling of sadness caused by unfulfilled hopes. All the ends are not neatly tucked in. There remains a lingering, bitter-sweet feeling surrounding the characters. These elements can best be illustrated by examining one of Andersen's most memorable tales, "The Little Mermaid."[3]

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[1]G. W. Stonier, Gog MaGog and Other Critical Essays (Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries Press, Inc., 1933), p. 117.

[2]Lynd, p. 156.

[3]Hersholt, Andersen's Fairy Tales, pp. 57-79.

The little mermaid lives with her father the sea king, her grandmother and her five sisters in a palace with walls "made of coral and its high pointed windows of the clearest amber" at the bottom of the ocean. Being the youngest, she has to wait the longest to visit the top of the ocean and see the world of humans. When it is finally her turn, she witnesses a young, handsome prince's birthday celebration taking place on a ship. A storm comes up and the ship is wrecked. The little mermaid manages to drag the Prince to shore and lay him where others can find him. She hides in the foam until she makes sure that he is rescued and will live.

> . . . The mermaid watched the Prince regain consciousness, and smile at everyone around him. But he did not smile at her, for he did not even know that she had saved him. She felt very unhappy, and when they led him away to the big building she dived sadly down into the water and returned to her father's palace.
>
> She had always been quiet and wistful, and now she became much more so. Her sisters asked her what she had seen on her first visit up to the surface, but she would not tell them a thing (p. 65).

She keeps returning to the spot where she left the Prince but she never sees him. Finally she can't bear her sadness any more and she tells "her secret to one of her sisters. Immediately all the other sisters heard about it. No one else knew, except a few more mermaids who told no one--except their most intimate friends" (p. 66). The little mermaid learns from one of the friends who the Prince is and where he lives. She goes up many evenings and watches him and his world. More and more she grows to "like human beings, and more and more she [longs] to live among them" (p. 67). She learns from her grandmother that human beings have an immortal soul but mermaids live for three hundred and then turn into foam on the sea. "'Can't I do anything at all to win an immortal soul?'" she asks. Her grandmother replied, "'. . . not unless a human being loved you so much . . . that he would let a priest join

his right hand to yours and would promise to be faithful here and throughout all eternity . . ." (pp. 67-68).

The little mermaid decides to visit the sea witch to learn how she can gain human legs. She then hopes to live among humans and win the Prince's love and an immortal soul. The witch tells her:

> ". . . . I shall compound you a draught, and before sunrise you must swim to the shore with it, seat yourself on dry land, and drink the draught down. Then your tail will divide and shrink until it becomes what the people on earth call a pair of shapely legs. But it will hurt; it will feel as if a sharp sword slashed through you. Everyone who sees you will say that you are the most graceful human being they have ever laid eyes on, for you will keep your gliding movement and no dancer will be able to tread as lightly as you. But every step you take will feel as if you were treading upon knife blades so sharp that blood must flow. I am willing to help you, but are you willing to suffer all this?"
>
> "Yes," the little mermaid said in a trembling voice, as she thought of the Prince and of gaining a human soul.
>
> " Remember!" said the witch. "Once you have taken a human form, you can never be a mermaid again. You can never come back through the waters to your sisters, or to your father's palace. And if you do not win the love of the Prince, . . . If he marries someone else, your heart will break on the very next morning, and you will become foam of the sea" (pp. 70-71).

In return for the draught, the little mermaid must give up her voice, "the loveliest voice of all, in the sea or on the land," to the witch. When the little mermaid reaches the beach, she takes the draught and gains a human form but has no voice. The Prince finds her on the beach and takes her back to his palace where she is acknowledged as the "loveliest person in all the palace." She goes everywhere with the Prince though every time she takes a step she feels as if she "were treading on sharp-edged steel. She becomes very dear to the Prince but he loves her as "one would love a good little child . . . he never [thinks] of making her his Queen" (p. 74). The Prince confides to the little mermaid that he loves the young girl who rescued him from the shore the day his ship wrecked. The girl, however, lives at a convent so the Prince believes

he can never marry her.

> "Alas, he doesn't know it was I who saved his life," the little mermaid thought. "I carried him over the sea to the garden where the temple stands. I hid behind the foam and watched to see if anyone would come. I saw the pretty maid he loves better than me." A sigh was the only sign of her deep distress, for a mermaid cannot cry. "He says that the other maid belongs to the holy temple. She will never come out into the world, so they will never see each other again. It is I who will care for him, love him, and give all my life to him" (p. 74).

However, the young girl in the convent turns out to be a prin- who had been staying there to learn "every royal virtue." The Prince meets her and prepares to marry her. He tells the little mermaid,"'My fondest dream . . . has come true. You will share in my great joy, for you love me more than anyone does.' The little mermaid kissed his hand and felt that her heart was beginning to break" (p. 76).

The night of the wedding the little mermaid joins in the celebration:

> . . . Light as a swallow pursued by his enemies, she joined in the whirling dance. Everyone cheered her, for never had she danced so wonderfully. Her tender feet felt as if they were pierced by daggers, but she did not feel it. Her heart suffered far greater pain. She knew that this was the last evening that she would see him for whom she had forsaken her home and family, for whom she had sacrificed her lovely voice and suffered such constant torment, while he knew nothing of all these things. It was the last night that she would breathe the same air with him, or look upon deep waters or the star fields of the blue sky. A never-ending night, without thought and without dreams, awaited her who had no soul and could not get one (p. 76).

After the celebration, the little mermaid's sisters come. They have sold their hair to the sea witch in order to gain a dagger for the little mermaid. They tell her that if she will kill the Prince and let his blood flow on her feet, she will gain back her fish tail and be able to live out her three hundred years as a mermaid.

> '. . . He or you must die before sunrise. Our grandmother is so grief-stricken that her white hair is falling fast, just as ours did under the witch's scissors. Kill the Prince and come back to

> us. . . .'
>
> The little mermaid parted the purple curtains of the tent and saw the beautiful bride asleep with her head on the Prince's breast. The mermaid bent down and kissed his shapely forehead. She looked at the sky, fast reddening for the break of day. She looked at the sharp knife and again turned her eyes toward the Prince, who in his sleep murmured the name of his bride. His thoughts were all for her, and the knife blade trembled in the mermaid's hand. But then she flung it from her, far out over the waves. Where it fell the waves were red, as if bubbles of blood seethed in the water. With eyes already glazing she looked once more at the Prince, hurled herself over the bulwarks into the sea, and felt her body dissolve into foam (p. 77).

Hope is not lost for the little mermaid, however. She is told, "'Your suffering and your loyalty have raised you up into the realm of airy spirits, and now in the course of three hundred years you may earn by your good deeds a soul that will never die'" (p. 78).

There are several differences between the characters in "The Little Mermaid" and those in tales from the oral tradition. For example, in oral fairy tales, the characters are "either good or bad, benevolent or malevolent. . . ."[4] The conflict arises when the good characters try to overcome either natural barriers like mountains or evil forces like witches and dragons. In "The Little Mermaid," however, there are really no physical obstacles to overcome or any "evil" characters except for the sea witch, and she is merely a catalyst, not the cause for conflict. The Princess who takes the Prince away from the little mermaid is not seen as an evil figure either. In fact, the mermaid describes her as the most "exquisite figure" she had ever seen. The Prince cannot be classified as a villain. He loves the little mermaid in his own way though not in the way she wants. Though obtaining human legs might be regarded as a physical obstacle to overcome, the gaining of them does not guarantee

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[4]Auden, The Dyer's Hand and Other Essays, p. 212.

the mermaid her goal. The conflict arises, then, not between good and evil, or man against external barriers, but between what is desired and what is attained. It is an internal battle with self.

In traditional tales, if the hero completes the necessary tasks and overcomes the obstacles, he wins the reward. An example of this type of character is the hero from Grimm's "The Queen Bee."[5] He is a "little insignificant dwarf" who sets out on a journey with his brothers. They are older and larger than he is, and they are constantly being cruel to animals. On the journey, however, the dwarf stops them from killing some ants, ducks and bees. Because of his kindness, these animals and insects later help him complete the three tasks necessary for him to win the princess and become king. Thus, the little dwarf is rewarded for his kind deeds. On the other hand, the little mermaid, though she makes the necessary sacrifices, does not win the Prince. He, too, has the right to choose what he wants in life though it may conflict with her goals. Thus Andersen's tales often reflect reality more than the traditional tales do: the princess does not always marry her prince and love that is given is not always returned.

The little mermaid wants two things, the Prince and an immortal soul. Though she can never marry the prince, she does have the chance to gain an immortal soul. But immortality is only a conditional promise based on her future actions. She has sacrificed much--her family, the Prince, her voice--and yet, she will not necessarily live "happily ever after." Thus Andersen's fairy tale world, like real life, is a mixture

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5"The Queen Bee," Anthology of Children's Literature, comp. Edna Johnson and Carrie E. Scott (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1935), pp. 85-86.

of happiness and sadness, losses and gains. The ultimate reward depends finally on the main character: what he is and what he tries to become.

Chapter 5

SUMMARY

The characters in Andersen's tales are many and varied. Only a few have been examined in this paper in an effort to identify some of the elements that make Andersen's characters unique individuals. Through the process of comparing Andersen characters with those found in the traditional fairy tales, some basic differences have been revealed.

In oral tales the hero is the same type of person at the end of the story as he is in the beginning. Only his status in life has changed. Andersen's characters, on the other hand, often gain a new knowledge of themselves whether they change status or not. The change in their character is internal, not external, as was illustrated by the Prince in "The Garden of Paradise" and Karen in "The Red Shoes."

Conversation is another element that is used differently by Andersen. It is used in oral tales as a means to impart information. This idea was pointed out in the discussion of "The Riddle." Andersen also uses conversation to supply information, but about the characters, not the action. As the passage from "The Ugly Duckling" showed, Andersen uses conversation as a means of revealing particular traits about his characters.

Also in Andersen, the actions of the characters are motivated by their respective personalities. The characters determine for themselves what they will or will not do. The Swineherd chooses not to marry the Princess. Likewise, the Prince from "The Little Mermaid"

chooses not to marry the little mermaid. Contrasted to this freedom of action is the Prince in "The Riddle." He marries the Princess not because of what she is but because marriage in the oral tradition symbolizes the ultimate goal.

Unlike traditional fairy tales, Andersen uses subtle humor, irony and satire to develop his characters. He is especially adept at using these elements to create interesting background characters. His minor characters are remembered as "individuals in a way that one fails to remember any of the hundreds of witches and young girls in the folk tales."[1] His non-human characters also create memorable images as one finds out an iron pot or a tin soldier can have as many problems as a human being.

Further differences include the fact that Andersen's characters do not always gain a "happily-ever-after" life. Sacrifice does not always bring the highest reward. "Hans Andersen, however, . . . believes in redemption through the love of others. . . ."[2] His characters, if worthy, usually have the possibility of future reward based on their kind deeds. Their struggles and failures, however, add a depth and dimension to their character that is missing in traditional fairy tale heroes.

Andersen seems to sense what each of his characters are like whether it be a prince or a tea pot. He is "unique in his capacity for entering into the very soul of beings and of things."[3] While a person

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[1]Auden, Forewords and Afterwords, p. 205.

[2]Lynd, p. 159.

[3]Paul Hazard, Books, Children and Men, trans. Marguerite Mitchell (Boston: The Horn Book, Inc., 1947), p. 97.

can relate to the characters in either a traditional or Andersen tale, there is a difference in the way he relates. "The folk tales are of a universal, human sediment. Andersen's are peculiarly personal. . . ."[4] Folk tale characters represent the general, basic desires and needs of all human beings. Andersen's characters represent those traits that human beings possess individually.

Though Andersen does not always succeed in creating realistic and unique characters, his successes overshadow his failures. Whether they be human beings, plants, animals, inanimate objects or imaginary creations, his characters will remain alive "by virtue of their being completely and divinely themselves."[5]

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[4]Walter De La Mare, Pleasures and Speculations (London: Faber & Faber Limited, 1940), p. 21.

[5]Ibid., p. 19.

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LIST OF ANDERSEN'S FAIRY TALES IN SOURCE ANALYZED

Title	Date of Publication
1. "The Tinder Box"	1835
2.* "Little Claus and Big Claus"	1835
3. "The Princess on the Pea"	1835
4. "Little Ida's Flowers"	1835
5. "Thumbelina"	1835
6.* "The Traveling Companion"	1835
7.* "The Little Mermaid"	1837
8.* "The Emperor's New Clothes"	1837
9.* "The Galoshes of Fortune"	1838
10. "The Steadfast Tin Soldier"	1838
11. "The Wild Swans"	1838
12.* "The Garden of Paradise"	1838
13.* "The Flying Trunk"	1838
14.* "Ole Lukoie"	1842
15.* "The Swineherd"	1842
16.* "The Nightingale"	1844
17.* "The Ugly Duckling"	1844
18.* "The Fir Tree"	1845
19.* "The Snow Queen"	1845
20. "The Elf Mound"	1845
21.* "The Red Shoes"	1845
22. "The Shepherdess and the Chimney Sweep"	1845
23. "The Little Match Girl"	1846
24. "Soup on a Sausage Peg"	1858
25. "The Marsh King's Daughter"	1858